

displayed on the display unit 274 of the gaming unit 180. The images may represent one or more forms that are transmitted from the gaming unit 180 to the server 140, and from there to the servers 168, 170, 172, for example. Alternatively, the forms may be downloaded from the servers 168, 170, 172 and returned to the servers 168, 170, 172 when completed. As a further alternative, the images may be associated with an on-line travel agent or travel organizer, which acts as an intermediary between the casino/network operator that administers the handling of the establishment of the competition and the awarding of the prize and the brand-promoters that administer the delivery of the component goods and/or services that make up the prize. As further alternative, the server 140 may control the printer 256 associated with the gaming unit 180, via the controller 310 associated with the gaming unit 180, for example, to provide a plurality of vouchers that may be independently redeemable with each of the brand-promoters for the component parts of the prize package.

[0187] According to a second example, the brand association routine 350 is operating in one of the gaming units 75, which also is operating as a video slots game, such as is shown in FIG. 6A. In this example, the brand association routine 350 does not rely on the player profile data, event criteria or brand criteria to determine the selected brand. Consequently, the brand association routine 350 begins with the determination of the brand at block 388.

[0188] The determination of the brand at block 388 may be made according to an input received from the player. In particular, a ticket or coupon may be fed into the ticket reader 256. According to the data printed on the ticket or coupon, which may have been given to the player as part of a promotional event for the casino or a promotional event for a brand-promoter, such as in combination with the purchase of a good and/or service from the brand-promoter, the controller 310 of the gaming unit 75 may determine which brand is to be selected.

[0189] At block 390, the controller 310 may retrieve brand materials that have been stored in advance in the program memory 312. According to this example, the brand materials may include a symbol to be used in place of at least one the symbols typically displayed on the reels during normal operation of the gaming unit 75. More particularly, the symbols may be dynamic; that is, the symbols may represent links to web pages stored in a remote location, for example, on the brand server 168. Further, the brand symbols may be used in an outcome for which a prize is associated, the prize being provided by the network operator from an inventory of prizes provided to the network operator by the brand-promoter. Furthermore, the brand materials may include advertising materials that may be downloaded to a personal communication unit 84 associated with the player and in communication with the transceiver 82 of the gaming unit 75.

[0190] Because the brand materials are stored locally, the distribution of the materials at block 392 may not be necessary, and the controller 310 may pass to block 394 to use the brand materials.

[0191] As for the brand symbols, the controller 310 may perform an initial check to determine that an iteration of the slots routine is not presently being performed. If the slots routine is being performed, the controller 310 may delay the substitution of the brand symbols until the routine has completed the execution of the present iteration of the slots

routine. Once the iteration is complete, the controller 310 may substitute the brand symbols for the symbols normally displayed. The controller 310 may also update the payable to include the brand symbols in those combinations where the replaced symbol was present, and to include the newly instituted prize featuring the brand symbols.

[0192] On the other hand, the controller 310 may download the advertising materials to the personal communication unit 84 as soon as the controller is ready to perform block 394. That is, the controller 310 need not delay the downloading of the advertising materials to the personal communication unit 84, which advertisements may take advantage of one or more wireless applications operating on the personal communication unit 84. These advertisements may be displayed on the screen of the personal communication unit 84 at the same time as the brand symbols are used in the presentation of the slots game on the display unit 274 of the gaming unit 75.

[0193] Because the brand symbols are dynamic, the player may retrieve further materials from a brand web site by touching one of the brand symbols, or more particularly an area of a touch screen immediately adjacent the section of the display screen 274 where the brand symbol is displayed. In response to this input, the controller 310 may retrieve a link associated with the brand symbol, and using the link, a web page associated with the link. This web page may be a home page for a web site administered by the brand-promoter for the selected brand, such as is shown in FIG. 7. The player may then navigate the brand or brand-promoter website to learn more about the brand and/or the goods and/or services associated with the brand.

[0194] Moreover, if the combination of symbols is displayed that results in a prize sponsored by the brand-promoter, the controller 310 may display an image similar to that shown in FIG. 8. The player is thus given three options for his or her prize, from which the player must choose one. When the form is submitted (when the player touches the "enter" button), the controller determines which option has been selected, and sends a signal or message to, for example, the network computer 76. The network computer 76 may, in turn, forward the signal or message through the network 102 to a remote server 110, which server may operate as a prize redemption server. The prize redemption server may have a printer associated therewith, and in response to the signal or message, may print a ticket. An employee of the operator administering the network 72 may receive the ticket, may obtain one of the selected payout from inventory, and may deliver the prize to the player at the gaming unit 75.

[0195] The operation of the gaming unit 75 according to the preceding example may continue until the player determines that he or she wishes to discontinue use of the brand association aspect of the system 50, that he or she wishes to discontinue use of the system 50, or the controller 310 determines, at block 444, that the brand will be changed.

What is claimed is:

1. A gaming method comprising:

- receiving a first wager from a player;
- displaying a first image representing a game;
- determining a first outcome associated with the game;
- determining a first payout according to the first outcome and a first payable;
- determining if a brand-association event has occurred;